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*The Prince and Afrikaners: The
Royal Visit of 1925*

Hilary Sapiro

The Prince and Afrikaners: The Royal Visit of 1925

Hilary Sapire

Abstract: For three months in 1925, Prince Edward (Prince of Wales) conducted an extensive tour through the Union of South Africa. While royal visits to dominions and colonial dependencies in the interwar years were promoted by the British government as a means of cohering the empire at crucial moments of dominion devolution, a special purpose of the South African royal progresses was to effect a reconciliation between the ruling white ‘races’ (whites of British descent and Afrikaners) and reconcile Afrikaners to the imperial tie. This article explores the complex and unexpected ways in which Afrikaners engaged with the young ‘ambassador of empire’ at the midpoint of a tumultuous decade in South African politics. Originally proposed by the renowned South African politician and imperial statesman, Jan Smuts, the tour took place when government was led by Afrikaner nationalists and included avowed republicans. Notwithstanding lingering resentments over the South African War (1899 – 1902) and Boer rebellion (1914 -15), the Prince’s visit was reckoned a success in softening anti-British prejudices of Afrikaners, boosting English-speakers’ morale, and saving South Africa for the Empire. Probing beneath breathless newspaper narratives of dour Afrikaners charmed into loyalty by a glamorous Prince, this chapter explains the apparent *volte-face* in Afrikaner elite and popular attitudes. Unlike the iconic royal visit of 1947 when nationalist dissent was openly expressed, discontents in 1925 were sublimated or masked by gestures of deference and satire. The article offers alternative perspectives on a pivotal decade in the fashioning of modern monarchy and on Afrikaner cultural politics

Keywords: Prince of Wales, royal visit, monarchy, Afrikaners, South Africa

In a letter to the London *Times*, Dorothea Fairbridge, the Cape colonial author and member of the Ladies Empire Club, wrote exultantly about the effects of the visit of the Prince of Wales in the South African autumn of 1925. Notwithstanding the apprehensions caused by “the Bolsheviks amongst our natives and the anti-English outlook of some of our fellow countrymen,” she wrote, she could testify as an eyewitness of the Prince’s coming that he had once again proved his value as a “great ambassador of Empire” in “the one dominion ... where the majority of the white inhabitants are not of British blood”:¹

From the smallest piccanin in Adderley Street to the distinguished Dutchman who awoke a strong Nationalist and found himself going to bed a surprised but fervid Imperialist, the Prince’s visit has been a triumph of courtesy, of kindness, of chivalry and tact. It has done more to consolidate the two white races in South Africa—who of all peoples on earth, need consolidation in the face of an overwhelming

¹ “South Africa under ‘Pact Rule,’” *Times*, 23 May 1925, xiv.

native population than years of mere diplomacy could have achieved.²

In hailing the last of the Prince of Wales' 'smiling' empire tours for delivering on its key promise—of reconciling Boer and Briton in a deeply divided South Africa that was reeling from a tumultuous decade of political strife and social change—Fairbridge was reprising the themes taken up in the British and English-language press of the day. Much of the newspaper and newsreel coverage, propaganda, and ephemera generated by the tour highlighted the Prince's capacity, through his personal magnetism and charm, to dispel republican and nationalist resentments. The "backveld Boer," wrote the *Times* correspondent Ralph Deakin, who accompanied the tour, "whenever he had come into the proper range of the Prince's personality ... allowed himself to be stirred and swayed as nobody else in the land could have stirred or swayed him."³ While one of the purposes of this article is to probe beneath such representations of dour Afrikaners charmed by a glamorous prince into a renewed appreciation of the British connection, it is striking that relatively few criticisms of the royal visit, the crown, and its association with British imperialism were publically expressed. It was, after all, only twenty-three years since the devastating Anglo-Boer War and less than a decade after the 1914-15 Rebellion, in which over 11,000 Afrikaners rose in armed insurrection against the state. Such criticisms of the tour that were aired were muted or conveyed indirectly through humour, satire, or studied indifference. By contrast, although more removed in time from these contentious imperial wars, the British royal family's Southern African tour of 1947 and Queen Elizabeth II's visit in 1995 to mark newly democratic South Africa's re-entry to the Commonwealth prompted overt opposition and outbursts of nationalist umbrage. During the former, Hendrik Verwoerd, editor of *Die Transvaler*, refused to cover the visit in the newspaper, while General J.G. Kemp, a Nationalist politician with a distinguished Anglo-Boer War background, pointed out that "those of us who took part in the --- War [Anglo-Boer War], or whose forebears took part, and who have since striven and are still striving for a Republic in South Africa --- cannot take part in a festivity which will strengthen the monarch in the Union."⁴ Just before the 1995 visit, referring to the atrocities of the Anglo-Boer War, some Afrikaners—albeit a beleaguered minority within a minority—opposed the Queen's presence in the country. Jaap Marais, of the Herstigte Nasionale Party wrote directly to the Queen to ask her to reconsider her visit on the grounds of the "holocaust of 26,000 Afrikaner women and children in British concentration camps" and the "intensified British War against the Afrikaner people since 1948."⁵

Even if the hyperbolic nature of the English-language newspaper reportage of Prince of Wales' 1925 visit is borne in mind, the question remains: why did the symbolism of a crown,

² "The Prince in South Africa," *Times*, 24 July 1925, 10. Fairbridge wrote several books, including a history of South Africa and studies of Cape culture, landscape, and architecture—all devoted to imperial activities and politics. Peter Merrington, "Pageantry and Primitivism: Dorothea Fairbridge and the 'Aesthetics of Union,'" *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2, no. 4 (1995): 643-656, esp. 643-644.

³ Ralph Deakin, *Southward Ho! The Tour of the Prince of Wales to Africa and South America: An Intimate Record by Ralph Deakin* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1926), 77, 202-203.

⁴ Cited in Jan Christiaan Smuts, *Jan Christiaan Smuts* (Cape Town: Cassell and Co., 1952), 501.

⁵ "A Royal Visit. It's Just Not Right," *Mail and Guardian*, 17 March 1995; Bill Nasson, "Commemorating the Anglo-Boer War in Postapartheid South Africa," in *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, ed. Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 279-280.

associated for many Afrikaners with an overbearing imperial power, not provoke the controversies that it did for African and Indian political organisations in that year, or anything akin to the opposition expressed by Afrikaners during later royal tours? Were expressions of enthusiasm and the prominent participation in the pageantry of this princely progress by former Boer War generals and the rebels of 1914 entirely the confection of the 'jingo' English-language and British press? Focusing on key encounters between the Prince and his Afrikaner subjects in the predominantly Afrikaner areas of the Western Cape and Orange Free State in the three-month royal visit of 1925, this article probes beneath the triumphalist press coverage to consider what meaning the visit of the Prince held for different Afrikaner constituencies, and how it affected the relations between the white 'races'.⁶ The import of the tour varied widely for South Africa's assorted populations, serving, for example, as a shot in the arm for many white English-speaking communities, especially in the Anglophone provinces of Natal and the Eastern Cape, and in the major cities where, while culturally and economically ascendant, they found themselves under a predominantly Afrikaner nationalist government since the previous year. Likewise, despite calling for boycotts of the celebrations of welcome for the Prince in protest against the government's exclusionary practises and segregationist policies, political leaders and the grassroots of African, Indian, and coloured communities responded to the royal visit with élan; it sparked a resurgence of 'black loyalism,' albeit contested, ambiguous, and conditional in its expression.

This article disaggregates the responses of white Afrikaner descendants of the first Dutch settlers and colonisers of the Cape, some of whom had fought in one, or both, of two wars against Britain in defence of their independent northern Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State (1881-1882 and 1899-1902). In so doing, it brings together and complicates two different historical narratives of the period: one that prioritises the burgeoning of an Afrikaner Nationalist movement and another that gives precedence to the imperial and metropolitan perspective of both royal tours and the changing relationships of the dominions with the crown. While the former ignores royal visits and royal occasions, implicitly suggesting their irrelevance to the processes of nation-building and cultural mobilisation, the latter emphasizes their significance for the empire and monarchy. The study of imperial monarchy and its global reach has increasingly focused on the glittering imperial tours that began in the late nineteenth century, but it is still only in royal biographies that the Prince of Wales' iconic visit to South Africa is featured in some detail. It is discussed as the crowning achievement of his dominion tours of the 1920s and as his apotheosis, the last occasion when he displayed his qualities as "ambassador of empire" to such great effect over a sustained period. Within the limitations of what a royal visit could achieve, Piers Brandon claims that it had wider ramifications at a profound moment of transition in the imperial system as a whole. He suggests that the tour made it easier for the Republican and Nationalist Prime Minister J. B. M. Hertzog, who played host to the Prince, to embrace the Balfour Definition of 1926, whereby South Africa, along with the other Dominions, gained national sovereignty within the empire. Once this declaration was enshrined in law by the 1931 Statute of Westminster, Brandon

⁶ The country's "race" problem in the period was conceived as the relations between English and Afrikaans-speakers, while the vexed issues relating to the governance of the majority African population was referred to as 'the native question.' The latter was of secondary importance to both the organisers of the royal visit and the Prince.

points out, for the next three decades, “South Africa glinted in the royal diadem.”⁷

Afrikaans-language sources, notably the press, however, reveal more variegated and contradictory sets of Afrikaner attitudes towards the monarchy, the British connection, and the cultural performance entailed in a royal visit than those implied in contemporary English-language accounts or in recent studies that look at the tour from the vantage point of Buckingham Palace and Westminster.⁸ Drawing on such newspapers and other local sources, the present article considers how Afrikaners, from the mayors of rural *dorps* [small towns or hamlets] and *platteland* [remote country districts] farmers to university students and government ministers engaged with the political theatre of the Prince’s visit. It queries whether widespread participation signified uncomplicated acceptance by people and politicians of an imperial relationship that was in the process of being reconfigured. Was it the power of the idea that the crown stood above politics, or perhaps the personal symbolism of monarchy embodied in an attractive young Prince that prompted people who were not ‘of British blood’ to converge in the streets to glimpse at the royal cavalcade as it passed through their town, or to serenade the heir to the throne with traditional patriotic folk songs such as “Afrikaner Landenote”?⁹

The Prince’s Mission in South Africa

With the chief purposes of promoting unity amongst the “white races,” raising the morale of the “British element,” and reconciling Afrikaners to the imperial connection, the last of the Prince’s dominion tours was regarded as the most politically challenging and portentous.¹⁰ Spanning the first half of the 1920s, these modern royal progresses took the Prince to North America, the Antipodes, Pacific, and India, and together with visits to areas of high unemployment, poverty, and deprivation in the UK in the 1930s, were crucial to the monarchy’s popularity. The brainchild of both the Prime Minister David Lloyd George and King George V, the empire tours were intended to furnish a meaningful role for the Prince of Wales following his war service, to thank the empire for its wartime contribution, and to help resolve the crisis presented to the imperial crown in the form of post-war nationalist dissent

⁷ Piers Brendon, *Edward VIII: The Uncrowned King* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 31; Philip Ziegler, *King Edward VIII: A Biography* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 140; Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government, and the Post War Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chapter 2.

⁸ On African responses to the Prince of Wales tour, see: Terence Ranger, “Making Northern Imperial: Variations on a Royal Theme, 1924-1938,” *African Affairs* 79, no. 316 (1980) 349-373; and Hilary Sapire, “Ambiguities of Loyalism: The Prince of Wales in Africa and India, 1921-2 and 1925,” *History Workshop Journal* 73, no. 1 (2012): 37-65. On Afrikaner engagements with earlier royal visits, see Charles V. Reed, “Royalty, Loyalism and Citizenship in the Nineteenth Century British Empire,” in *Royals on Tour: Politics, Pageantry and Colonialism*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2017), 115-136; and Philip Buckner, “The Royal Tour of 1901 and the Construction of an Imperial Identity in South Africa,” *South African Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (1999): 324-348.

⁹ “Die Prinslike Reis,” (The Prince’s Journey), *Die Burger*, 26 May 1925.

¹⁰ Ziegler, *Edward*, 136. One such member of the “British element” appealed to the Prince’s relative, Louis Mountbatten, to ensure that the Prince’s visit included the Northern Transvaal where “we are surrounded by the rather disloyal type of Dutchman ... [A] visit from the Prince would help us enormously and I am firmly convinced that it would help the Empire in that it would have an appreciable effect upon the disloyal Dutch.” National Archives (Pretoria): Prime Minister (PM) 1/2/407 POW 3 Reginald Donnell to Louis Mountbatten, 25 December 1923.

and the dominions' search for "status" and greater autonomy within the empire.¹¹ The authorities at home and the dominion capitals hoped that the presence in their midst of a representative of the crown would persuade sceptics, cultural nationalists, and separatists that not only was the crown more than a decorative "feudal anachronism," but that it was a pivot and vital symbol of imperial unity.¹² Once completed, the dominion tours were hailed as a signal achievement in this regard, even if some intellectuals regarded them as "propaganda of inanity unparalleled in the world's history."¹³ Sir Lionel Halsey, who had accompanied the Prince as a naval equerry, maintained years later that it was "the Monarchy that kept the Empire together."¹⁴ Whether this was indeed the case, the effusive and warm public responses to the Prince's early tours of Canada (1919) and Australia (1920) flew in the face of anxieties about the divisive effects of French Canadian cultural nationalism (which had peaked during the 1917 conscription crisis) and fears that the burgeoning "Anzac" sentiment and "bolshevism" in Australia could weaken imperial and monarchical ties.¹⁵

Whilst separatism, Anglophobia, and outbursts of labour insurrectionism in post-war Australia and Canada seemed to threaten the imperial fabric, the powerful republican yearnings of Afrikaner nationalists seemed all the more dangerous on the eve of the Prince's visit to the Union. There, unlike Canada, where French Canadians were a majority only in Quebec, secessionist dreams came from the numerically dominant Afrikaner section of the white population and from some Nationalist leaders who were now in power and who could draw on memories of republican independence. The Prince of Wales would be faced with the challenge of simultaneously confirming the English speakers' "Britannic nationalism" that had been burnished during the war and affirming the cultural integrity and political aspirations of Afrikaners. The original invitation to the Prince to visit South Africa was issued in 1923 by the Union's Prime Minister, Jan Christiaan Smuts, the former Boer War general turned imperial statesman whose rising international stock as peacemaker was paralleled by ignominy at home where he was vilified as a "butcher" and "hangman" for his role in the brutal suppression of the revolt of white workers of the previous year.¹⁶ Having authored the pamphlet *A Century of*

¹¹ Murphy, *Monarchy*, chapter 2.

¹² Rupert Godfrey, ed., *Letters from a Prince: Edward, Prince of Wales to Mrs Freda Dudley Ward. March 1919–January 1921* (London: Warner Books, 1998), 182.

¹³ Theo Aronson, *Royal Ambassadors: British Royalties in Southern Africa, 1860-1947* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1975), 82.

¹⁴ "The Prince of Wales' Empire Tours," *Times*, 16 February 1931, 9.

¹⁵ Following the tour of 1919, the Prince of Wales visited Canada in 1923, 1924, and 1927. Significantly, French-Canadian cultural nationalism had been dampened by 1918 and the crown had been exempted from French Canadian resentment of English cultural hegemony. In Australia too, notwithstanding the Labour Party's threat to boycott the royal visit in 1920, a deep-rooted, popular monarchism and loyalty—albeit informed by pragmatism, irony, and playfulness—trumped separatist and republican impulses. John Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Judith Brown and Wm Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64-87; Mark McKenna, "Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference," in *Australia's Empire*, ed. Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 261-288; John Herd Thompson, "Canada and the Third British Empire, 1901-1939," in *Canada and the British Empire*, ed. Philip Buckner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 87-106. On the allegiance of non-British white subjects to the crown, see: Donal Lowry, "The Crown, Empire Loyalism and the Assimilation of non-British White Subjects in the British World: An Argument against Ethnic Determinism," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31, no. 2 (2003): 96-120.

¹⁶ Ockie Geyser, *Jan Smuts and His International Contemporaries* (Johannesburg and London: Covos Day, 2001), 68;

Wrong, an excoriating tract denouncing British imperialism on the eve of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), it was the “magnanimity” of the newly elected British Liberal government in granting self-government to the defeated Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State in 1907 that led him to become a fierce advocate of maintaining links with the British crown, which he came to see as the most effective unifying force in South Africa and the Empire, and to promote the cause of “English” civilization. Distancing himself, not for the last time, from more intransigent versions of Afrikaner Nationalists, Smuts also was a crucial figure in the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 that was premised on a newly vibrant colonial nationalism embracing both English and Afrikaner, and founded on “shared affiliations of whiteness.”¹⁷ It was Smuts, together with the Union’s first Prime Minister, Louis Botha, who took South Africa into the First World War in 1914 on the British side and planned to invade the German colony of South West Africa. This decision, in turn, unleashed Afrikaner Nationalist passions and offered an ideal opportunity for those still unreconciled to the imperial connection to attempt to reclaim their lost independence. Although Smuts dealt leniently with most of the rebels who rose against the state, his stance remained controversial, as did his increasingly central role in the prosecution of Britain’s war effort in Africa and abroad, and the recognition and esteem shown him in imperial and international fora as the war’s victors sought to create a lasting peace. Within a year of the war’s conclusion, Smuts replaced Louis Botha as Prime Minister. Bestriding the world stage, he also sought to fulfil his own sub-imperial dreams of a “greater South Africa” that would incorporate the High Commission Territories of Basutoland, Swaziland, and Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia and establish the regional hegemony of the Union of South Africa.¹⁸

Plans for the projected visit of the Prince of Wales in 1924 were well advanced before Smuts decided to go early to the country in a parliamentary election when it was evident that his support was ebbing away. In response to insinuations from his opponents that the Prince’s visit “was going to be exploited for party purposes,” Smuts resolved to postpone the tour to the following year. As he explained to the Prince, the embarrassment of postponement was preferable to the dangers of “unpleasant incidents” taking place in a royal visit during a general election. These had to be “avoided at all costs”¹⁹

In the ensuing election of 1924, Smuts was unseated from power; the ruling South African Party was displaced by the “Pact” coalition of Nationalists (the dominant partner championing Afrikaner interests) and Labour (promising white worker protection through ‘civilized labour’ policies) with a new government presided over by Smuts’ erstwhile rival, J. B. M. Hertzog, as premier.²⁰ It was Hertzog who re-issued the invitation to the Prince in July 1924, and who would play host to the royal visitor in the following year. Having distanced himself from both Louis Botha and Smuts for their policies of “conciliation” of English and

Shula Marks, “Smuts, Jan Christiaan (1870–1950),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi: 10.1093/refodnb/36171. Hereafter ODNB.

¹⁷ Bill Schwartz, *Memories of Empire: The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 280-283; Marks, “Smuts,” ODNB.

¹⁸ Hopes of incorporating Southern Rhodesia as a province of South Africa were dashed in the referendum of October 1922, when Southern Rhodesian (whites) rejected this option.

¹⁹ NA: PM12/7 Prime Minister to the Prince of Wales, 7 May 1924; “Postponement of the Prince’s Visit,” *Cape Times*, 9 April 1924.

²⁰ C. E. M. O’Dowd, “The General Election of 1924,” *South African Historical Journal* 2 (1970): 54-76.

Afrikaner, and favouring the promotion of both Afrikaner interests and those of South Africa before the Empire, Hertzog also remained on the sidelines during the Rebellion of 1914 – 1915 and favoured neutrality during the war. He had left Botha's cabinet in late 1913, and soon after, formed the Afrikaner National Party which attracted growing numbers of disaffected Afrikaners, mainly from the Free State, to its banner. A key point to bear in mind, however, is that despite Hertzog's professed republicanism and earlier espousal of anti-imperialism, as part of his electoral pact with the predominantly English Labour Party, he had agreed to not agitate for secession from the empire. Moreover, writes historian W.H. Hancock, Hertzog was steadily moving towards Smuts' view that a free association under the crown with other Commonwealth nations would satisfy his followers' national aspirations, so long as they could be persuaded that they possessed equality of status within the Commonwealth and wider society of nations.²¹ Although not all Nationalist politicians and ideologues were convinced, with the parity of the English and Afrikaans languages officially recognised in 1925, and moves afoot to ensure greater dominion autonomy, Hertzog could embrace his role as host to a visiting British royal with equanimity. He assured one Afrikaner sceptic that hosting the royal visit did not compromise Afrikaner nationhood and that they could, with pride "look the rest of the world in the eye as equals."²² At the reception for the Prince hosted by both houses of parliament, he declared that the royal visitor would receive a warm welcome in "the Highveld of the Transvaal, the plains of the Free State and lonely villages and farms."²³ "Perhaps," mused Smuts, "it is as well that the visit came after a change of Government in this country. Instead of the Nationalists now standing aloof and pointing to us as jingoes and snobs, they have to do the job themselves with our approval, and the national unanimity of South Africa is therefore far greater than it would otherwise have been."²⁴ In similar vein, the British military secretary to the Governor-General, Bede Clifford, reassured the Prince that he would "find the Nationalists not a bit behind the late Government in doing their utmost to give him a good welcome," and that the new Prime Minister was "a very charming man to talk to and does not really believe in all this secession nonsense."²⁵

Given the delicacy of a situation in which the Prince's hosts included some individuals who were unreconciled to Hertzog's new-found ideal of national sovereignty under the British monarchy, meticulous care was taken by the government committee in charge of the tour's planning and both imperial and royal officials to ensure that Afrikaners were meaningfully incorporated into the ceremonial, pageantry, and rituals, and that due deference was paid to their national aspirations and cultural sensibilities. Minor amendments were made to the original programme prepared under the previous Smuts government including the passing of a resolution in Parliament to appeal to the King that no titles be conferred on subjects of the Union during the Prince's visit on the grounds that South African sentiment was opposed to titles as "foreign institutions imposed on our people."²⁶ As *Die Burger* warned on the eve of the

²¹ Keith W. Hancock, *Smuts, Volume 2: Fields of Force 1919-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 200-202.

²² NA: SAB Hertzog Collection, A 32 Vol. 103, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister to M. E. Rothmann, 21 April 1925.

²³ Deakin, *Southward Ho!*, 66.

²⁴ Deakin, *Southward Ho!*, 199.

²⁵ Royal Archives (RA): E/PWH/VISOV/1925AFSAM, Clifford to Thomas, 8 August, 1924.

²⁶ "South Africa and Titles," *Times*, 25 February 1925, 13; NA: PM 1/2/407 POW Gordon Watson to Godfrey

Prince's arrival, while Afrikaners would receive him with the honour due to the heir to the throne and with the hospitality for which they were renowned, they should not be expected to offer the sort of welcome he was likely to receive from English-speakers. Afrikaner traditions and "character" had been shaped in a culture at the Cape that did not recognize a king—"only Jan Companie" (referring to the Dutch East India Company that first colonised the Cape); the "sons of the veld" did not share their English-speaking compatriots' conceptions of kingship.²⁷ It is notable that this trope—of innate courtesy and hospitality amongst Afrikaners and a romanticised notion of plain, unpretentious, independent folk for whom aristocratic aloofness and flunkeyism was repugnant—was resonant in *both* English and Afrikaner press reports.²⁸

Supporters and organisers of the tour regarded it as essential that the Prince's main speeches—especially the address before the two Houses of Parliament in Cape Town and in the capital, Pretoria—serve as "weighty pronouncements." They should reference South Africa's evolving constitutional position *vis-a-vis* the British government and crown as a consequence of initiatives from some dominions to achieve greater autonomy within the empire following the First World War. Bede Clifford suggested that the Prince eulogise the "progress that has been made and the great things that have been achieved in South Africa." A special mention might be given to "the enterprise and achievements of the two White Races, and the realization of the need to work together towards the advancement of their Country."²⁹ If the royal visit was to serve as effective propaganda for both the empire and South African government, it was essential to engage the most prestigious reporters, photographers, and filmmakers. From the British end, as Godfrey Thomas pointed out, the press representatives "were not the ordinary penny-a-line reporters," but men of standing in the journalistic world. "From experience of three previous Dominion Tours," he wrote, "I can assure you that it pays to look after them well. If everything runs smoothly in the press they can help a lot towards the success of the Tour."³⁰ Indeed, as Markus Viljoen, the representative for *Die Burger* and *Die Volksblad*, later recalled, the journalists on the "cow train" that accompanied the princely "white train" through Southern Africa were plied with free cigarettes and alcohol for their pains.³¹

Thomas, 6 March 1925. In fact, the motion was proposed by Arthur Barlow, MP of the predominantly English-speaking Labour Party.

²⁷ "Besoek van die Prins van Walia," (Visit of the Prince of Wales), *Burger*, 30 April 1925. Susie Protschky has recently drawn attention to the ways in which the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina (1898-1948) served as a powerful symbol of transnational solidarity across the Dutch colonial world, including South Africa, where it provided an alternative pole of identity to that of the British crown for many Afrikaners. No objection was raised to the issue of monarchy *per se*: "Orangists in a Red Empire: Salutations from a Dutch Queen's Supporters in a British South Africa" in *Crowns and Colonies. European Monarchies and Overseas Empires*, ed. Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 97-118.

²⁸ See, for example, Deakin, *Southward Ho!*, 202-3; Major F.W. Verney, *HRH A Character Study of the Prince of Wales* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), 203.

²⁹ RAEDW/PWH/VISOV/1925/AFSAM, File 1025, Bede Clifford to Godfrey Thomas, 4 April 1925.

³⁰ NA: PM 1/2/407 POW Godfrey Thomas to Gordon Watson, 5 February 1925. Ralph Deakin of the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*'s George Ward-Price published lavishly illustrated accounts of the tour: Ward-Price, *Through South Africa*; Deakin, *The Tour*.

³¹ J. M. H. Viljoen, *'n Joernalis Vertel* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953), chapter 9. The "cow train" was named for the Freisian cows brought along to ensure a daily supply of fresh milk.

Courting Afrikaners

Following a whirlwind visit to the British West African colonies including Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Gold Coast, and Nigeria, HMS *Repulse* docked in Cape Town on 30 April to begin the “real and proper goal of the cruise.”³² Travelling in the purpose-built luxurious white train that sped through the vast Southern Africa landscape, the Prince’s journey—punctuated by visits to Swaziland, Basutoland, the Rhodesias, and Bechuanaland—comprised brief halts in the (white) towns and *dorps* (villages); three- or four-day long visits to the cities; and about a dozen great gatherings of “tribal” Africans in, or near, the rural reserves and protectorates. It reflected the peculiarly South African repertoires that had been developed in the royal visits of the Prince’s great-uncle Prince Alfred in 1860 and his parents, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later George V and Queen Mary), in 1901, particularly the meetings with “traditional” African chiefs and “civilized” urban *amaRespectables*—a term used by Africans to denote Christian, book-educated men and women who dominated church and formal political organisations. Yet, the visit also fitted a “royal tour” template fashioned through the royal tours of the dominions and colonies since their inception in 1860, with its state dinner, balls, mayoral receptions, military reviews, religious services, schoolchildren’s demonstrations, sporting fixtures, hunting excursions, and the production of complex, dual narratives of national pride and imperial attachment.³³ In addition to acknowledging and incorporating Afrikaner cultural and political idioms in a repertoire of royal tour ceremonial that had evolved as a component of Anglicisation that began at the Cape in the nineteenth century, the organisers pointedly included reconciliatory, symbolic gestures. The Prince was escorted into small towns in the Cape interior, Orange Free State, and Transvaal by mounted Afrikaner commandos that recalled the guerrilla commandos of the Anglo-Boer War. He visited key battle sites of the war and laid wreaths on the graves of the Presidents Kruger and Steyn, who had led the states that had gone to war with Britain in 1899. His visit to Steyn’s grave at the Women’s Monument in Bloemfontein, which commemorated the lives lost in the concentration camps, however, was private and without the accompaniment of press photographers or cinematographers.³⁴

It was, however, the Prince’s address to both houses of parliament following a glittering state banquet, and his clear, if halting concluding lines spoken in Afrikaans that attracted the most fulsome praise and claims for its transformative effects on a divided country. In accordance with the strictures about “weighty speeches,” the address, composed by Godfrey Thomas and Bede Clifford, referenced the momentous post-war shifts in the constitutional status in the self-governing components of the British Commonwealth, referred to South Africa’s importance as a mandatory power in South West Africa, and acknowledged how fully “the conception of a brotherhood of free nations was working out.”³⁵ But, claims one of the Prince’s biographers, it was sections of the speech that the Prince worked over himself that were most reported in the press, and it was his concluding words in Afrikaans—“Meneere, ek

³² Deakin, *Southward Ho!*, xv.

³³ Jane Connors, *Royal Visits to Australia* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2015), 7.

³⁴ Aronson, *Royal Ambassadors*, 87; Ziegler, *Edward*, 137, Viljoen, ‘*n Journalis Vertel*, chapter 9.

³⁵ “The Prince at Cape Town,” *Times*, 2 May 1925; 14, “Prince Speaks in Afrikaans,” *Natal Mercury*, 4 May 1925; “A Triumph for the Prince,” *Times*, 5 May 1925, 16.

is baie bly julle vanaant te ontmoet, en ek bedank julle nogmals vir julle warme welkom!” (“Gentlemen, I am very pleased to meet you to-night, and I thank you again for your warm welcome!”)—that “brought the house down.”³⁶ Ralph Deakin described the scenes that followed:

Fellows who all their lives had professed a red-hot republicanism clamoured round him clapping and shouting: formality and suspicion had melted like butter in the sun. There were dozens of “rebels” anxious to have further word with the Heir Apparent and dozens of other wanting to teach him the words of Dutch ditties and songs.³⁷

The fact that former rebels and Nationalist Members of Parliament for Free State and Transvaal constituencies made enthusiastic statements about the Prince’s speech was seized upon by British commentators. The *Times*’ correspondent gleefully quoted the words—however non-committal—of the Minister of Agriculture, General Christoffel Greyling Kemp, who had fought against the Jameson Raiders in 1895 and in the Anglo-Boer War and was imprisoned for participation in the 1914-15 Rebellion. He had predicted the Prince would make a favourable impression: “He is the sort of man who makes himself liked. He is a sportsman and a man.”³⁸ That *Die Burger*, under the editorship of the Afrikaner ideologue Albertus Geyer, pronounced the evening as “unforgettable” and reported some Nationalists claim that it had brought about “a new era for the country” suggests that the euphoric English-language accounts faithfully reflected a genuinely joyous event, albeit one in which disbelief was momentarily suspended.³⁹

Two other vignettes simultaneously capture the contrived character of the Prince’s encounters with Afrikaners and the élan that accompanied them: the reception of students at the University of Stellenbosch, the acclaimed intellectual home of the burgeoning Afrikaner Nationalist movement, and the reception in Bloemfontein, capital of the Free State. At the former, the Prince was welcomed to the university with renditions of the anthem *Die Stem van Zuid Afrika* (The Call of South Africa) and a witty oration by student representative, Johann Buhr, which delighted the royal guest and earned the praises of both the English and Afrikaner press.⁴⁰ The second encounter provoked even more copious press coverage; much meaning was teased out of the fact that the welcoming mounted commando of two thousand men was led by General Conroy, the sitting Nationalist Member of Parliament for Hoopstad, yet another former rebel, and that it comprised men who had come together on horseback from

³⁶ Ziegler, *King Edward*, 137.

³⁷ Deakin, *Southward Ho!*, 66-67; “Prince Speaks in Afrikaans,” *Natal Mercury*, 4 May 1925; “The Prince at Cape Town,” *Times*, 4 May 1925, 14; George Ward Price, *Through South Africa with the Prince* (London: The Gill Publishing Company, Ltd., 1926), 5, 8-61; “A Triumph for the Prince,” *Times*, 5 May, 1925; Ziegler, *Edward*, 137.

³⁸ Albert Grundlingh and Sandra Swart, *Radelose Rebelle? Dinamika van die 1914-1915 Afrikanerrebellie* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2009), 14.

³⁹ “Die Besoek van Die Prins” (The Prince’s Visit), *Burger*, 4 May 1925; “Die Koninklike Gas” (The Royal Guest), *Die Burger*, 30 April 1925. See also “n Annus Mirabilis” (“An Annus Mirabilis”), *Die Huisgenoot*, 15 May 1925. The Prince’s respect for the Afrikaans language was gratefully acknowledged.

⁴⁰ Herman Giliomee, *Buhr van die Bokveld: ‘n Sprankelende Intelligensie’* (Kaapstad: Africana Uitgewers, 2015), 14-15; “Die Prins se Reis na die Binneland” (The Prince’s Journey to the Interior), *Burger*, 5 May 1925; “Die Prins was a ‘Nice’ Seun,” (The Prince was a “Nice” Boy), *Die Burger*, 21 August 1976. I thank Hermann Giliomee for sharing his research findings on his uncle, Johann Buhr.

the surrounding rural districts of Boshof, Jacobsdal, Bethulie, Thaba Nchu, and Wepener in response to Conroy's call. To great acclaim the Prince mounted a chestnut horse and rode at the head of the commando, for two miles into the provincial capital and to the crowded municipal reception at Kings Park. The spectacle of the resurrected military formations that had harried their British enemies during the Anglo-Boer War providing an escort for the Prince was, for visiting commentators, a dramatic visual confirmation of the transformation in Afrikaner attitudes towards Britain.⁴¹

The commando and all it stood for was perhaps, the most inspiring sight of an inspiring day... Down Monument Hill the column came, facing the late afternoon sun, leaders and outriders wearing yellow sashes in place of bandoliers. The men carried their rifle butts at the hip and took their job far too seriously for smiles.⁴²

The Prince took these men by storm, claimed the *Times* correspondent Ralph Deakin, because he rode with them, addressed them in their own tongue and spoke to as many as was humanly possible.⁴³ That the institution of the commando, so redolent with the symbolism of Boer independence, egalitarianism, masculinity, and martial pride could be so willingly associated with the royal representative of imperial hierarchy was striking to observers. Even the scrupulously impartial Afrikaner journalist Markus Viljoen could not help being impressed at the unanimity and enthusiasm of the commando escorts and by the men's willingness to leave their farms at a particularly busy time in the agricultural cycle. What exactly motivated the commando members is not clear. Perhaps the opportunity to come together for the first time since the war for a major state event was a compelling factor, and no doubt the fact that forage for the commando's horses for four days was provided at the state's expense—an initiative fully supported by Hertzog—helped overcome any reservations.

⁴¹ When the Royal Family visited South Africa in 1947, the staged commando escorts excited similar comment in the British media. The *Times* correspondent, wrote in similar vein of the symbolic power of these “mainstay(s) of the fighting strength of the old Boer republics” escorting the British king into Afrikaner towns. “Boer Escort for the King,” *Times*, 27 March 1947, 4.

⁴² Deakin, *Southward Ho!*, 111.

⁴³ “The Prince in the Free State,” *Times*, 26 May 1925, 16. On the royal visit to Bloemfontein, see Hannes Haasbroek, “Prins van Wallis se Besoek aan Bloemfontein in Mei 1925,” *Navorsinge van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein* II, no. 7 (1995): 150-190.



Fig. 1. The Prince of Wales conferring with Commando leaders, unspecified location, Cape, c. May, 1925: Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Library Photographic Collection, Ralph Deakin Collection, DK-RT/57.

Republican Doubters, Youthful Critics

Even before the trip, claims were made that Afrikaners were “clamouring” for their piece of the action. The *Rand Daily Mail*, for example, reported that the population of the Free State, “usually regarded as the stronghold of Republican sentiment,” was dissatisfied with the brevity of the projected visit to their province, during which three days were to be devoted to polo and other amusements at the Duke of Westminster’s estate. This, complained the newspaper, “is hardly fair to the Free State, which is anxious to prove to the Prince that it is neither so anti-British nor so violently Republican as it has been painted.” Dr Colin Steyn, the Nationalist member for Bloemfontein South, claimed that if the tour’s organising committee was anxious to show the Prince what “real” South African hospitality meant, it was necessary to allow him to “spend more time among the Boers of the ‘veld’.”⁴⁴ The fact that the great commando escort in Bloemfontein was nearly scuppered due to conflict between General Conroy and the provincial administration and mayor over who would be first to welcome the Prince to the town testifies to a strong desire on the part of many leaders in the most Nationalist province to be closely associated with the rites and ceremonies of welcome.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ “More Time Among the Boers,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 December 1924, 10.

⁴⁵ On the battle over precedence, see Haasbroek, “Die Prins van Wallis se Besoek.”

Spontaneous gestures and requests for involvement in the welcome ceremonies came from sometimes unexpected quarters. Whilst one Mr J. J. Swanepoel from Smithfield wrote to Hertzog offering a gift of Afrikaner cattle for the Prince, a Mrs Rautenbach requested permission on behalf of the Vroue Nasionale Party (Women's National Party) of the Witwatersrand to hold a reception for the royal visitor. Such a gesture, she hoped, would win greater sympathy from a great section of the English population who are "still hostile against us."⁴⁶

Afrikaners participated with varying levels of enthusiasm and for a variety of motives, yet there were individuals who were uneasy and discomfited by both the Prince's visit and what they saw as demeaning participation in the tour's celebrations by Nationalists. The pioneering female Afrikaner journalist with *Die Burger*, Maria Elizabeth Rothmann, was horrified at the prospect of Afrikaner students at Stellenbosch singing songs of welcome to the Prince. She urged her daughter, a representative on the Student Council, to persuade fellow students not to participate, and wrote to the Prime Minister of her dismay and grief at what she saw as a betrayal of principle. "Did the women in the concentration camps perish for our children to greet the conqueror in this festive spirit?" she asked.⁴⁷ The Cabinet Minister Tielman Roos, the vehemently Republican founder of the National Party branch in the Transvaal would not participate in celebrations in Johannesburg. He turned down Hertzog's request to attend an official dinner as representative of the province after he discovered that the event was to take place in the Rand Club, a quintessentially English institution that had barred Roos during the war on the grounds of his Republican opinions. The urgings of Jan Hofmeyr, the provincial administrator, signally failed to alter his resolution. Another cabinet minister refused to be seen driving through Johannesburg streets beside the Prince.⁴⁸ However, such explicitly stated objections were not voiced in public quarters, and it is notable that two instances of principled objections to the symbolism of the tour were articulated by Afrikaner students. One of these young Afrikaner Nationalists who objected to being dragooned in to a "stage managed imperial extravaganza" would later make his name in Apartheid South Africa as a celebrated Communist dissenter, and as both the defence lawyer at the "Rivonia" Treason Trial of 1963 (in which eight accused, including Nelson Mandela were found guilty) and defendant when he was convicted in 1966 under the Suppression of Communism Act. In his final year of school in Bloemfontein in the year of the Prince's visit, Bram Fischer, the descendant of the Free State statesman Abraham Fischer, took his "first political action" when he refused to participate in Grey College's ceremonies of welcome for the Prince. In taking this stand against the compulsory participation in the festivities, the young man was supported by his family. Writing to him after the Prince's departure, his mother expressed the hope that he had been "well out of the way." It had given her "such a sore heartache," she wrote, to see the Prince "treading his Imperial way through our country. I don't mind the English and SAP's [Smuts'

⁴⁶ NA: PM 1/2/407 POW 2/1 Private Secretary to Prime Minister to J.J. Swanepoel, 23 April 1925 and Private Secretary to Prime Minister to M. Rautenbach, 10 January 1925. The Nasionale Vrouwen Partij (National Women's Party) had been established in Johannesburg in 1915 by Johanna Brandt. The Transvaal committees united in 1915 to form the Nasionale Vroueparty in support of the rebellion and the rebels' families. Grundlingh and Swart, *Radelose Rebellion*, 64.

⁴⁷ NA: SAB Hertzog Collection, A 32 Vol. 103, M. E. Rothmann to Hertzog, 10 April 1925 (transl).

⁴⁸ Aronson, *Royal Ambassadors*, 98.

South African Party] honouring their Prince, but I'd rather not witness it.”⁴⁹ Fischer was alienated, not only by the presence of the King's son at a time when bitter memories of the war had not been laid to rest, but by what he perceived as the excesses of English-speakers' enthusiasm. In this, he was not alone. The young journalist Markus Viljoen who travelled with the royal entourage and sought to provide measured coverage of the tour later recalled his distaste for the “hysterical” responses of his fellow South Africans, ridiculing the frenzied chase for objects like matches or cigarette ends cast off by the Prince, or bemoaning the fate of journalists who stood in danger of being trampled underfoot by crowds desperate to be close to the Prince.⁵⁰

It was not exclusively Afrikaner commentators and observers who found the cult of celebrity surrounding the Prince simultaneously unseemly and comical. The novelist William Plomer whose stock with the English-speakers of Zululand rose when his family relationship with the Prince's private secretary became known, remembered how “the whites in Eshowe, as elsewhere, ran after the Prince, staring and jabbering excitedly as if trying to round up a rare animal.”⁵¹ Warming to a similar theme, but motivated by concern that the more elevated reasons for the Prince's tour had been submerged under the inane excitement whipped up by the press, the editorial writer of *The Cape* expostulated in early March: “The Prince's smile, the Prince's clothes, the Prince's cigarettes, the Princes' neckties, the Prince's cocktails—all this silly and unreliable newspaper gossip about His Royal Highness is creating an atmosphere utterly foreign to the high purpose of the Prince's visit.” The royal visitor, he wrote, “has come here not to dance or to jazz or to play polo or bridge, nor to halloo to the Karoo out of the window of his White Train. His Royal Highness, in coming to South Africa, has a serious purpose to think of, and a serious duty to perform. He is the representative of his royal father the King, and in an even larger way, the ambassador of the great ‘Community of Nations’ over which he will one day preside.”⁵²

If the young Bram Fischer responded to the symbolism of imperialism with outrage, Johann Buhr, the student leader who addressed the Prince in Stellenbosch, resorted to irony, humour, and direct personal engagement with the royal visitor. Like Fischer, he objected to the militaristic resonances of school cadets (which featured prominently in the pageantry of this and other royal occasions), refusing to participate in the university's ceremony of welcome in Stellenbosch unless a proposed school cadet display was cancelled. Moreover, chafing against the close control exercised by the organising committee and the university authorities over the itinerary, he would not provide the requested prepared copy of his speech for their approval.⁵³ But, having made his peace with the vice-chancellor, he delivered what Markus Viljoen judged to be the only noteworthy speech of the tour.⁵⁴ Barbed, teasing, and ironic, he addressed the Prince: “We have come here to-day, your Highness because we like to see a man and we cheered because we know a man when we see one. Our presence here is intended as a tribute

⁴⁹ Stephen Clingman, *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1998), 42-43.

⁵⁰ Viljoen, *n' Journalis Vertel*, chapter 9.

⁵¹ William Plomer, *The South African Autobiography* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Phillip and Africa South Paperbacks, 1984), 161.

⁵² “Welcome to Our Prince!,” *The Cape*, 1 May 1925.

⁵³ Letter from Johann Buhr to his father, undated, c. late May/early June, discovered by Jan Giliomee. “Die Prins was a ‘Nice’ Seun,” *Burger*, 21 August 1976.

⁵⁴ Viljoen, *n' Journalis Vertel*, chapter 9.

to your manliness, which the most persistent attempts of the whole world have not been able to spoil.” He went on, obliquely referring to the fact that several national leaders were in prison for political reasons:

I am afraid your Highness will find that all our most popular heroes are people who have either been in gaol for political crimes or in hospital for fractured bones. I must admit that the fact that your Highness has never been in gaol is a serious disqualification, which I sincerely trust your Highness will manage to get remedied before leaving the country. On the other hand, your Highness has, fortunately, on several occasions managed to get yourself into hospital and I can assure you that on that count alone your visit would give us great pleasure.⁵⁵

It is notable that Buhr, like General Kemp, made flattering public allusions to the Prince’s manliness and sportsmanship, attributes highly valued by white South Africans. But the student leader certainly did not come away from his good-humoured, albeit brief exchange with the Prince thinking he was the embodiment of manliness. On the contrary, he wrote to his father, he considered the heir to the throne to be a “hopeless ‘specimen of humanity’, lacking in the attributes one would expect of a man in his position.” But he also respected the Prince’s conscientiousness and sense of duty in undertaking a mammoth series of taxing and soulless duties, and sympathised with him for having to play his assigned role. It was his ordinariness that particularly struck Buhr. The thirty-one-year-old Prince was, he thought, a “thoroughly ‘nice’ boy.”⁵⁶

Mission Accomplished?

If many Afrikaners claimed to have been charmed by the Prince, or at least sympathetic to him, the royal visitor did not return the compliment. In a letter to his mother from Abe Bailey’s farm in the Colesberg area, he wrote, “I can’t cotton on to the Dutch which I’ve got to pretend to do & am trying hard”:

But they are a slow dull narrow minded race & heavy in hand & you know its [sic] terribly hard in fact absolutely impossible to get keen or worked up over them—A most unattractive crowd—But I’m doing my best & I’ve learned a few (very few) words of Afrikaans – their language – which they are crazy about but which is no better than a patois composed of Dutch-English & Malay & such bad Dutch that Afrikaans is barely understood in Holland—of course it’s a farce & no use commercially—rather like the French-Canadian tenaciousness over their corrupt French—and they’ll get over it. But I’m all for doing anything that goes down well with them.⁵⁷

The Prince had been no more enamoured with many colonials of British descent whom he met on his various tours than he was with Afrikaners or French Canadians. During his

⁵⁵ Deakin, *Southward Ho!*, 69-70. After the screening of a film about Buhr in 2017, a journalist described this speech as ‘an almost Shakespearean symphony of subtle jibes cloaked as jokes and nationalist sentiments disguised as bonhomie’. Personal communication, Hermann Giliomee.

⁵⁶ “Die Prins was ‘n ‘Nice’ Seun”; “A Triumph for the Prince,” *Times*, 5 May 1925, 16.

⁵⁷ RA: QM/PRIV/CC9, Prince of Wales to Queen Mary, 11 April 1925. Elsewhere, the Prince complained that Afrikaners were “dour to a degree”; “a sticky, slow dull, narrow-minded and unattractive race” and that it “went against the grain to be nice to them.” Duff Hart Davis, *Royal Service: The Letters and Journals of Sir Alan Lascelles, 1920-1936* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), 2:46-47.

Australian visit of 1920, he complained about “bolshies,” or members of the Sinn Féin, and while gratified at having won them over, he described his hosts as “boobs” and himself a “trapped animal.”⁵⁸ But he found the South African tour tedious in the extreme, as did other members of his entourage; they complained about the enormous distances covered in the heat and dust of the interior, about the sameness of uninspiring *dorps* and the absence of pleasant diversion and distraction. Although sport, hunting, and several balls were laid on for the Prince, it was, wrote Godfrey Thomas, “the most heart-breaking, the most soul-less programme I have ever undertaken.”⁵⁹ In his memoirs, the Prince was more diplomatic about the tour and Afrikaners specifically, making special note of the famed Boer hospitality and recalling how he was met on various towns’ outskirts by “columns of burly Dutch farmers riding shaggy horses.” But the fact that he referred to “possibly exaggerated tales of burning farms and the concentration camps” suggests that neither the tour nor the interceding years had altered his somewhat limited perspectives.⁶⁰

On the Prince’s return to Britain, however, the King declared his satisfaction at the reports of his son’s conduct in South Africa despite difficult conditions, and of the warm responses he had elicited. Writing to his brother-in-law and Governor-General, the Earl of Athlone, he said that he and Queen Mary took pride in the accounts of “enthusiastic and inspiring welcomes which he received every day and everywhere.” He was confident “that knowledge mutually gained as a result of his visit will serve to increase and strengthen the spirit of comradeship and cooperation between the nations and peoples of the British Empire.”⁶¹ In a rare complimentary letter to his son, King George V congratulated the Prince “on the great success of your tour in South Africa,” commending him especially for the way in which he went out of his way to be “civil to the Boer.”⁶² Many observers were similarly enthused by the Prince’s successes in winning over Afrikaners; this was epitomised by Dorothea Fairbridge’s letter to the *Times* quoted at the opening of this article. Yet there were individuals involved in the tour’s organisation or who observed it from close quarters that were more circumspect in their assessments of its impact and significance. The Prince’s private secretary recognized the impossibility of expunging the bitterness of generations through a royal spectacular, while acknowledging that that a modest achievement was that Afrikaners and “the British section” found that they “were able to sit on the same platform with a common object ... and it is a long time since they have done that.”⁶³ The Governor General likewise conceded that it was unlikely for “a people possessing republican aspirations and ideals which have been evolved in the course of many generations ... to be influenced to any lasting extent by a visit from the heir to the Throne.”⁶⁴ Also in reflective vein, Markus Viljoen pointed out that it was mistaken to discern in the cordial, courteous, and even enthusiastic receptions that the Prince received in some Afrikaner circles any sign of new-found loyalty to the “English prince”. As the only

⁵⁸ Godfrey, *Letters from a Prince*, 446.

⁵⁹ Ziegler, *Edward*, 137.

⁶⁰ Edward, Duke of Windsor, *A King’s Story: The Memoirs of the Duke of Windsor* (London: Prion Books, 1998), 207.

⁶¹ NA George V to Athlone, 15 October 1925.

⁶² RA: PS/PSO/GV/PS/MAIN 37430 George V to Prince of Wales, 14 July 1925.

⁶³ Ziegler, *Edward*, 138.

⁶⁴ John Lambert, “‘A United South African Nation and Not Merely a South African Peopled by Afrianders and English’: the Earl of Athlone and the Attempts to Forge a Dominion South Africanism in the 1920s,” *Kleio* 34 (2002): 146.

bilingual journalist covering the tour, he later claimed, he was best placed to make sense of his countrymen's reactions. Two factors were notable. The first was the strength of the tradition of hospitality and the idea that the Prince was a guest in their country. The second reason for the apparent effusion of Boer monarchical fidelity was sheer human curiosity—which was surely true for all South Africans that came together in such huge numbers to witness the white train speeding through the countryside, or to join the clamorous street crowds. Anything else, Viljoen averred, represented a “wholly wrong interpretation.” Going further, he suggested that misapprehensions about Afrikaner attitudes arose from the fanciful descriptions of cheering multitudes and transcendent ceremonies by journalists under constant pressure to produce fresh prose about a tour that was gruelling and mind-numbingly repetitive.⁶⁵

Added to the considerations identified by Viljoen is the point raised by Smuts: Hertzog and his followers, as holders of power and hosts to the royal visitor, had no choice but to fully embrace the visit. As Hertzog put it in response to M. E. Rothmann's objections, “the Government, as representative of the People of South Africa, receives the Prince as the future ruler as recognised by our constitution and by the National Party.”⁶⁶ Unlike the case in 1947, Nationalists could not claim that the royal visit was being used by their political opponents for electoral gain. This would explain the apparent *volte-face* of the minister of agriculture, General Kemp who had praised the Prince in 1925, but condemned the Royal Family's visit in 1947. Constrained in 1925 by the requirements of diplomacy, during the later tour, in his old age and in political opposition, the General perhaps felt free enough to express his truer feelings.⁶⁷ Even so, Kemp's praise of the Prince was hardly effusive, referring only to his likeability: indeed, even at the state banquet after his celebrated speech, one Nationalist parliamentarian teasingly requested the Prince “to stay here with us and be our first President,” indicating that he had warmed to the Prince as a person and not as a representative of the British Crown.⁶⁸ The motivations of ordinary Afrikaners for joining the celebrations were various: the sheer pleasure in a public spectacle, in joining friends in city streets transfigured by illuminations and banners must have been among them. The liminal effects of a two-month-long royal visit in turn owed something to the glamour of the young Prince, his informality, and the conscientiousness with which he appeared to conduct his duties. His evident nervousness—betrayed in the much-reported fidgeting of his tie—only added to his attractiveness. “One had only to see him,” wrote William Plomer, “to understand that the immense volume of cant continually poured out in the press about this ‘Prince Charming’ ... was based upon the truth that he was young and to most people appealing, and that he did his duty with energy.”⁶⁹

As these vignettes demonstrate, Afrikaner engagement with the royal visit of 1925 was layered and ambiguous.⁷⁰ Deference, curiosity, and admiration mingled with lingering war resentment, satire, defiance, and expressions of courtesy that often masked distaste. Responses were also inflected by regional political cultures, generation, gender, and social experience of individuals. This is not always apparent in the fawning English-language media coverage that

⁶⁵ Viljoen, *‘n Joernalis Vertel*, chapter 9.

⁶⁶ NA: SAB Hertzog Collection A32 Vol 103 Private Secretary to the Prime Minister to M. E. Rothmann, 21 April 1925.

⁶⁷ I thank Albert Grundlingh for this observation.

⁶⁸ Aronson, *Royal Ambassadors*, 98.

⁶⁹ Plomer, *South African*, 161.

⁷⁰ Bill Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902* (New York: Arnold, 1999), 267-268.

purveyed images of uniform mass responses in standard journalistic tropes of exultant multitudes. These have the effect of obscuring class, gender, and ethnic differences, and gradations of feeling and attitude, especially in cities such as Bloemfontein and Johannesburg where Afrikaners constituted a significant component of the white working classes. Gendered responses certainly merit closer study: although most encounters between the Prince and South Africans were meetings of men, cameos of an all-female commando, for example, or of an Afrikaner women's organisation requesting a special reception of the Prince, suggest that Afrikaner women's political identity at this stage could still accommodate the celebration of a British royal figure, and that the symbolism of their suffering in the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer war had not yet acquired the focal, emotive power that it would in succeeding years of ethnic mobilisation.⁷¹ The immanent and implied critique of Anglocentric public culture, the pride expressed in Afrikaner tradition during the tour, and the objections of M.E. Rothmann and a younger generation of nationalists, however, represent strands of the more concerted forms of cultural nationalist mobilisation that would come together in subsequent decades. An examination of the tour thus affords glimpses of the muffled Afrikaner resentments of Anglophone triumphalism and cultural insensitivities that fed into the later ideological labours of Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs who mobilised a fractured constituency behind the Nationalist banner. This was achieved over the next two decades through literature, language promotion, philanthropy, memorialisation, and the sacralisation of Afrikaner history. Significantly, these initiatives took place at a time of accelerating movement into the cities, spaces which had, since the late nineteenth century, been made English, not least through the civic architecture that provided the grand stage settings for the invented political traditions of royal celebration and pageantry.⁷² Even then, the 1934 visit of the Prince's younger brother, Prince George (later Duke of Kent) failed to ignite Afrikaner dissent. By this time, South Africa's national sovereignty had been legislatively endorsed by the Statute of Westminster, and Hertzog, host once again to a son of the King, would claim to be "filled ... with the deepest appreciation towards the British people and Government" for "giving us what is rightly ours without once looking back."⁷³ Even after the Second World War, possibly the most important catalytic event in the nationalist mobilisation of Afrikaners, great numbers participated as celebrants and spectators in the festivities associated with the visit of the Royal Family in 1947, in the face of outright opposition or cold politeness from politicians and editors. By contrast, such resentments as were openly expressed during the Prince of Wales' visit seemed less directed towards the crown than at their English-speaking compatriots who were unfavourably compared with a British prince who had at least taken the trouble to learn a few words of their language.⁷⁴ Here, as in other case studies of the making of the culture of imperial monarchy, is an instance in which the very openness of the symbolism of the crown to multiple

⁷¹ Throughout the tour, the largest-circulation Afrikaans weekly *Die Huisgenoot*, that had as one of its aims, the cultivation of "volkskap"—a shared sense of nationhood and identity—published photographs of the Prince in his encounters with Afrikaner dignitaries, farmers, students, women and veterans of the war and rebellion.

⁷² Albert Grundlingh, "The National Women's Monument: The Making and Mutation of Meaning in Afrikaner Memory of the South African War," in *Writing a Wider War. Rethinking Gender, Race and Identity in the South African War, 1899-1902*, ed. Greg Cuthbertson, Albert Grundlingh, and Mary-Lynn Suttie (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 30.

⁷³ "Future of South Africa. General Hertzog's Tribute to Britain," *Times*, 1 August 1934.

⁷⁴ "n Annus Mirabilis" ("An Annus Mirabilis"), *Die Huisgenoot*, 15 May 1925.

interpretations had former enemies singing its virtues.